



# Department of Justice

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Middle District of Florida

Tampa

Orlando

Jacksonville

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## **OPERATION PANAMA EXPRESS ANNOUNCES** **MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DRUG DEALERS INDICTED**

\_\_\_\_\_ Tampa - FL U.S. Attorney Robert E. O'Neill announced today the unsealing of two indictments charging four individuals with conspiring to import cocaine to the United States. In the first indictment, HEBERTO YESQUEN-ESTUPINAN, WILLINGTON ESTUPINAN-PORTOCARRERO and RUSBEL ALBERTO CHAVEZ-GUEVARA are charged with using the fishing vessels "Lina Maria" and "San Jose" to smuggle cocaine into the United States. The F/V Lina Maria was interdicted in the Eastern Pacific Ocean on September 16, 2004 by the USS Curts carrying a total of 12,000 kilograms of cocaine. Seven days later, on September 23, 2004, the USS Crommelin seized 10,500 kilograms of cocaine found onboard the F/V San Jose approximately 1,000 miles off the west coast of Colombia.

On Sunday, November 18, 2007, HEBERTO YESQUEN-ESTUPINAN was apprehended by heavily-armed Colombian authorities at a cemetery in Cali, Colombia having attended the funeral of his son. Despite being accompanied by several dozen armed bodyguards YESQUEN-ESTUPINAN was arrested without incident. The U.S. Attorney's Office in Tampa is in the process of having him extradited back to the United States to face these criminal charges in Tampa, Florida. The two co-defendants remain at-large.

In a separate indictment, WENCESLADO CAICEDO-MOSQUERA was charged with conspiring to import cocaine into the United States, manufacture and distribute cocaine and transport cocaine on maritime vessels. Caicedo-Mosquera was apprehended in Ecuador in March 2005 and was recently extradited to Tampa, Florida. He is currently awaiting trial before the Honorable James S. Moody.

It is alleged Caicedo-Mosquera worked with Yesquen-Estupinan in Colombia and Ecuador transporting multi-ton quantities of cocaine to Mexico for distribution in the United States. The record-setting September 2004 interdictions of the F/Vs Lina Maria and San Jose were organized by Caicedo-Mosquera and Yesquen-Estupinan on behalf of the North Valle cartel. Purportedly, both vessels had successfully smuggled approximately 110 tons of cocaine from 2002 until September 2004. Numerous additional smuggling ventures, successful and seized, have been linked to Caicedo-Mosquera.

“The Panama Express Strike Force is committed to dismantling Colombia’s next generation of high-level cocaine trafficking organizations. The United States Attorney’s Office applauds the Strike Force and its Department of Defense, Colombian and Ecuadorian counterparts in this effort,” stated U.S. Attorney O’Neill.

The defendants all face a maximum of life imprisonment if convicted.

This case is being investigated by the Panama Express Task Force, which consists of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Joint Interagency Task Force-South (JIATF-S), and the U.S. Coast Guard. These cases are being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorneys Joseph Ruddy and A. Lee Bentley.

\_\_\_\_\_An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent unless, and until, proven guilty.